DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 983 CS 205 333

AUTHOR Covert, Catherine L.
TITLE The Newspaper and Intellectual History: A New Approach.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 23p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, TX, August 5-8, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents: *Content Analysis: *Historiography: *Intellectual History: *Journalism: *Newspapers: United States History

ABSTRACT

New ways of relating the newspaper to the history of thought are discussed in this paper. It suggests that intellectual and media historians may approach the newspaper either institutionally, as a significant cultural variable in the reception of new thought, or as an analytic probe (both in content and form) by which to assess that process of idea transformation within a society over time. It proposes that newspaper content over a span of time may be approached diachronically or synchronically in a search for the meaning of ideas and the perceived significance of a new thought pattern as presented on the newspaper page. In addition it suggests that the formal elements of the news story when analyzed might shed light on public understanding of new ideas as perceived by the reporter. The paper also advocates the use of the newspaper morgue as both a finding device for evidence and an analytic tool to reflect categories already available in the society for classifying and assimilating new ideas. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED179983

THE NEWSPAPER AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY:

A NEW APPROACH

by

Catherine L. Covert
Professor

Newhouse School of Public Communications
Syracuse University

Presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Houston, Texas, August, 1979.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Catherine L. Covert

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS205333

THE NEWSPAPER AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY:

A NEW APPROACH

I. Introduction

The important ideas of an era -- those of a Marx, a Darwin or a Freud -- profoundly affect the societies through which they move. But the ideas are changed in turn, expanding, contracting, fragmenting or blending with other ideas into new wholes in response to the forces they encounter. The historic role of the mass media in this process has gone almost unexplored.

I should like to suggest such exploration as an approach for the historian of media interested in tracing relationships between ideas and society. I will use the newspaper as a primary example.

For more than three centuries newspapers have acted as a force in transforming important thought to meet and express cultural expectations. I will argue that this transformation occurred, in the first place, because journalists have tended to write and edit in terms of the dominant assumptions of the culture from which they have come. A second reason is that the newspaper must present material consonant with such general cultural assumptions in order to stay alive. Because the newspaper has participated in and preserved a record of the process, it may be studied as an important cultural variable in the reception of new thought. It is also a significant evidentiary form.[1]

Scholars using the newspaper generally have not paid a great deal of attention to such subtleties. They have tended to see the newspaper pri-

marily as a research tool and to accept a newspaper account, sometimes at face value, as a simple record of actions taken or attitudes and sentiments expressed. Intellectual historians have sometimes been more critical, dismissing newspaper accounts of ideas as "distorted" or "sensationalized" or merely as simple and repetitive versions of more complex original thought.[2]

It is possible, however, to see a good deal more in a clipping than the report of an event to be lifted whole, or the form of an idea to be dismissed as defective or uninteresting because it is not a Xerox copy of the original. The historian may approach the newspaper instead as cultural artifact, an antique spy-glass through which to view the transit of an idea through some past society. Admittedly, one may get a murky view of the idea. By looking at the glass of newspaper form as well as through it, however, one may account for the murk and learn something of historical value, not only about the idea and the glass, but about the society that produced the glass and viewed ideas through its peculiar perspective.[3]

So one proceeds in several stages. To prepare, one studies the idea in a form as close as possible to its original expression, (though with the tendency of ideas to twine about and immerse themselves in each other, identifying an "original" may be arbitrary.) Secondly, one resorts to the glass of newspaper form to provide a view of the idea's adventures in society. And thirdly, one compares the idea as perceived through the glass with the original. Here one attempts to deduce from the comparison something about the effects on the idea of cultural imperatives expressed via editorial and publishing process, newspaper form, and reader expectations.

In this article I will make suggestions for methodology including definition of the original idea, collection of data, and an approach to interpretation.

As illustrative material, I will use examples from a study of the idea

system of the Viennese philosopher and psychologist, Sigmund Freud (1866-1939) as it crossed the Atlantic from Europe and was spread via the American newspaper. The decade is that of the 1920's, a period in which the explosive power of Freudian thought in its new surroundings becomes visible to anyone selectively reading the American press of the period. And it was to the newspaper that Americans of the time turned more frequently than to any other public medium.[4]

Beginning in 1906, initial writing in the United States about the New Psychology had come from a handful of Freudian disciples publishing in scholarly journals. After Freud's American visit in 1909, interest quickened on the part of other scholarly writers, poets, novelists, playwrights and magazine writers. By the Twenties, newspapers were providing primary coverage of his thought for the general American public. Mass media coverage appeared to peak in 1925 and 1926, diminishing gradually to the end of the decade when the Freudian fad languished and depression distracted a nation from absorption in its own psyche.[5]

II. Defining the Idea

One's quarry in this enterprise is the elusive idea. One may search through the papers of a period for a generalized concept ("brotherhood" perhaps, or "deviance" or "equality"). In such a case, one may wish to monitor the occurrence of a particular word or phrase, noting perhaps changing meanings and contexts. Then it is necessary primarily to specify certain key words or phrases, and look for them.

But if more complex connotations or patterns of meaning or whole systems of thought are involved, and change is to be assessed, it is vital to find some authentic early form of the idea expressed prior to its report in newspaper form. Such an original permits comparisons and contrasts with the idea as later expressed in newspaper copy and formation of hypotheses as to how and

why the idea was retailed whole, or compressed, expanded, edited or reshaped as it emerged in successive newspaper versions.

The most obvious "original" form of a thinker's work comes in his published writings. This "original" is relatively stable if you have presciently chosen the ideas of such an author as Darwin who waited for years to publish his version of evolutionary theory and elaborated thereafter on relatively few occasions.

Freudian ideas, on the contrary, are maddening to try to pin down in any sense of a stable and single "original". Taking a whole shelf of books to formulate and reformulate his theories over the years, Freud seemed constantly to be modifying or enriching or abandoning original thought and terminology (with the newspaper press in America frequently tagging years or decades behind).[6]

In trying to compare a Twenties newspaper discussion (and there were many) of Freud's idea of the sexual impulse as motive, for example, one runs into a tangle of problems. Was sex or was it not the only motive force of human behavior, the only inspiration for dreams? Did sex mean the animal instinct alone or all the fullness of mature love? The answer depended on Freud's state of mind and stage of composition. It was difficult for newspaper people or anybody else to be precisely sure what Freudian theory actually was. Some works published in the Twenties by Freud, who was still writing vigorously, were easier to work with as originals, than earlier writings. Newspaper comment appeared while the works were fresh, and one could compare the ideas as expressed and explained in the American press before Freud had time to modify them. But other newspaper accounts in the Twenties -- particularly those evoking the most provocative concepts, those of motive and the unconscious -- often harked back to far earlier versions and the "original" became almost impossible to define.

Therefore for purposes of comparison, a version not quite so pure but a little more stable sometimes becomes desirable. You can tell a good deal about what newspapers were doing with Freudian thought, for example, by comparing their renditions not with Freud's own works but with versions of Freudianism advanced by his most ardent American disciples, certain Freudian analysts who set out with missionary fervor to convert the country and shrewdly seized on the press. Such a Freudian as Dr. William Alanson White proved ideal. He had a passion for making psychoanalysis clear, and lectured all over the country, modifying his flexible and inventive style in hopes of reaching whatever group was before him.[7]

White testified for the defense in the Leopold-Loeb murder case in 1924, giving a careful and orderly statement of Freudian theory to try to explain why any two men would murder in such apparently inexplicable fashion. In the transcript of the trial I was finally able to unearth that rare object in the pre-electronic era, a word-for-word account of an important verbal statement of Freudian thought. By comparing the court transcript of White's words with the variegated newspaper versions, I could check immediately and accurately the ways in which his version of Freudian ideas were ignored, reshaped or presented whole, in the Sunday papers. Other verbatim transcripts of original verbal expression can be found in court and legislative records, or transcribed proceedings of meetings (the A.S.N.E. proceedings for the 1950's are an unbelievably candid report of what newspaper editors actually said to each other. The versions of their proceedings reported in their own papers next day are instructive to behold.)[8]

Diaries of those who spoke to the great can also provide intermediary accounts of original thought. So can autobiographies of newspaper reporters impressed enough with their own enterprise to include recollections of such

interviews in their own autobiographies. (One usually suspects, however, the retouchers' hand.) Such a rare piece of evidence as a reporter's first-hand notes of the original interview usually can be found only in historians' wilder fantasies, but a particularly determined Syracuse University archivist finally unearthed that precise thing for me, the grubby notebook in which the young Dorothy Thompson recorded her 1923 visit to the famous Viennese consulting room at Bergasse 19. Then a fragile hand-written index to the Philadelphia Public-Ledger preserved in the basement of the Philadelphia Free Library led me to the story she produced after the interview. The comparison between notes and story was instructive.[9]

An upstate New York Methodist minister's daughter, Thompson managed to write an entire story about Freud without ever using the word "sex." An aggressive young woman who had fought her way to a central European correspondent's post, she also omitted from the story a scathing comment from Freud she had noted to the effect that Americans, particularly "idle American women", were converting psychoanalysis into a fad. It is tempting to infer the presence of an odd conjunction of held-over Victorian taboo with current feminist attitude, operating through the reporter to modify the transmission of Freudian thought. Interesting testimony, that, to the complex intellectual and moral climate of the American Twenties.[10]

A final problem in handling ideas may lie in recognizing them in their various versions in newspaper copy. America at certain periods has been particularly marked for its homogenizing atmosphere, taking European originals in art and architecture as well as ideas and modifying them past recognition. This is particularly true of the final states of assimilation when the idea has settled happily and almost unrecognizably into its adopted milieu. One must find clues in language, structure or content. Freudian ideas were almost always discussed, even when Freud's name was not used, in the terms he had

invented or appropriated to clothe his thought, or in weird new versions of his words. Americans in the 20's were infatuated with Freudian jargon; the reporter eagerly joined the game popular among the literati, that of selecting just the analytic phrase necessary to lend flair to one's own expression. "What kind of a complex has the Long Island railroad anyway?" inquired a head writer for the New York Journal. "Have you been psyched?" queried a cartoonist for the Chicago Tribune. Most skilled must have been one Brooklyn Eagle reporter who quite seriously managed to use "unconscious," "neurotic," "psychopathic," "sadism," "erotic," "sex," "herd," "instincts," "fantasy" and "sublimate," all in one article to explain a police beat. It was not hard to recognize in that, or almost any other article derived from Freudian inspiration, the mark of the original."

III. Searching for Data

Appropriate data for intellectual historians vary according to the kind of intellectual history one pursues. In one group, says John Higham, are historians who study the history of formal systems of thought. They tend, I believe, to focus on evidences of explicitly-defined ideas circulating in restricted communities such as those of philosophers, theologians, scholars, or artists. Their data comes from more limited or intimate exchanges, diaries, letters and journals or sermons, scholarly publications, novels, poetry, and plays.[12]

In the other group are historians who study what the French have called mentalité or collective states of mind. This "collective mentality" has been variously defined as group expectation, self-perception, or more informally, what was "thinkable" in a certain human collective at a given moment of time. Intellectual historians have shared this field with other scholars calling themselves social or cultural historians, and they have pursued evidence considerably farther afield. The most venturesome kind of study, says Laurence Veysey, undertakes to relate the first kind of intellectual history to the second,

to relate a formal system of thought to the collective mentality. One such historian, he says, is Nathan G. Hale, Jr. who has written Freud and the Americans relating the formal system of Freudian thought to the collective mentality of Americans generally. Hale and his colleagues in the study of Freudian idea dissemination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have largely limited their uses of mass media to the popular magazine. The newspaper -- that vast, inchoate, messy kind of evidence -- remains largely unexploited. [13]

And for good reason. The occurrence in newspaper copy of the mention of certain widely-cited and clearly-labeled concepts -- that of "juvenile delinquency" for example -- can be measured via sampling. But it requires other devices to follow the shifting forms of more complex and less frequently-mentioned idea systems as they penetrate the collective mentality. One can leaf through bound volumes or crank microfilm forever, and neither sampling nor serendipity will turn up much about Freud. One must, however, find whole articles and groups of articles to understand the migration of his thought. What methods may be used? [14]

The most productive methods at present are through newspaper indexes, morgues, and intensive reading of the coverage of certain relevant events where news of one's subject is apt to appear.

Access to newspaper indexes available for search has expanded greatly since the classic listings were made in the 40's by Herbert Brayer and Norma Ireland. In the 70's a mounting interest in the field from historians and librarians has produced a growing number of guides to published and unpublished newspaper indexes held by historical societies, libraries and newspaper offices. And newspaper morgues are places of rich and strange delight for historians alert for indications to the ways in which previous eras found it possible to think. [15]

There are problems. Morgues (or "libraries" as they are now more modishly called) of living newspapers are apt to be barred to outside researchers. Media historians who once had professional credentials as working newspeople are here advised either to gain access through collaboration with a colleague on the inside (I was once hidden in a back office at the New York Times by a friend who pretended to the librarian a sudden infatuation with clippings on Freud and smuggled to me that morgue's unparalled historical archive of material on psychoanalysis) or to call the morgue in one's most brusque reporter's voice, and assure them you know what you want and will be "fast in" and "fast out". (These are the magic words for morgue keepers, more interested in the space and time you will take than in the lofty purposes of scholarly research.)

Morgues of dead newspapers (stored in libraries if you are lucky and in inaccessible warehouses if you are not) provide an archaeological expedition to the mind of past decades, with clippings in neatly-titled yellow envelopes, filed according to the conceptual patterns of the communities involved, and sometimes still laid down within the envelopes in geological layers of crumbling newsprint. Infrequently used by historians anywhere, these morgues provide, I believe, one of our culture's richest troves of historic evidence as to past patterns of thought, neatly filed according to subject, accessible on demand, and rarely used. [16]

Classification systems in a morgue reflected the course of collective thinking. Here young filing clerks and aging supervisors -- unwitting agents of culture -- showed the ways in which it was possible to think about a new idea in that particular community over the years. Clerks filing clippings about Freud in the morgue of the N.Y. Herald-Tribune were obviously intended to put them in a new envelope marked "PSYCHOANALYSIS" or one of the older envelopes such as that marked "MEDICINE: PSYCHIATRY", (a symbolic action in itself showing the imposition of the medical model under which psychoanalysis in this country had been by

the 20's already subsumed). They frequently put them, instead, into fat, popular old envelopes bulging with clippings dated back into the 1880's and marked "DREAMS", a category both ancient and powerful. It seemed easier, perhaps, to accommodate this new philosophy of human behavior if it were regarded only as another expression of a concern compelling to the human imagination since Pharaoh. In this morgue, therefore, one could gain insight into the way new ideas were taken captive and explained in terms of older, more familiar categories. One could also infer something of the crucial tension between rival explanatory systems of behavior familiar to the mind of the 1920's -- the tension between the newer science and the age-old occult.

At the Brooklyn Eagle an extant cross-file card from the morgue preserved in the Brooklyn Public Library shows that clerks were expected to file everything on psychoanalysis under "MEDICAL: MENTAL DISEASES." They didn't. Actually they filed them customarily under any personal name mentioned in the story. Obviously the clerks were more attuned to organizing their thought in terms of people than of vast conceptual schemes, a quality that subsequent evidence indicated was probably characteristic to Americans in considerably larger groups. (At the Philadelphia Public-Ledger in the same period, all stories about sex were filed under "SOCIAL HYGIENE.")

A third way to search for coverage of ideas is to examine the newspapers for events to which these particular ideas are crucial. Very few news stories are written about ideas alone. (Both editors and reporters historically have displayed a preference for writing about feeling and action, letting thought crop up accidentally to the main story where it might. In this respect as well, I became convinced that journalistic tendencies reflected more general habits and preferences.)

Certain kinds of events seem to mobilize the general imagination in certain periods, moving editors to devote extensive space to the ideas associated with

such events. The abolition riots that so seized the mind of the 1830's and allowed extended coverage of popular ideas on slavery were paralleled by the general fascination with sensational court trials in the 1920's. Coverage of the Scopes trial in 1925 would prove as important to a historian of the public reception of evolution as coverage of the Leopold-Loeb trial in 1924 proved for Freudianism.

The public in that decade also was entranced with news of incoming ocean liners from Europe and the celebrities they bore. Newspapers dispatched their men on revenue cutters and pilot boats to intercept the great as their ships were gliding up the bay. While the major goal of such enterprise tended to be pictures of glamour girls sitting on ships' rails with their legs crossed, interviews with other kinds of celebrities did qualify. Sometimes such celebrities brought with them new ideas important to the American scene. Thus ship-news reporters elicited many ideas about Freudianism from visiting European analysts in this rather off-hand way. To the historian searching for such appropriate kinds of events, a thorough knowledge of the period and a lively historical imagination are particularly vital.

To the pursuit of ideas beyond the more obvious devices of index, morgue or event, such imagination is one's primary guide. I once set out to envision what other sources might exist beyond these three. One such would be a scrapbook of newspaper clippings on Freudianism kept by one of those rare individuals, a Freudian analyst practicing in the United States during the 1920's. One day in a Boston coffee shop a colleague told me he had discovered a collection of clippings made by a pioneer Boston analyst, Isador Coriat. Next day, I found preserved in the Francis A. Countway Library of the Harvard University Medical School my perfect specimen, pages immaculately laminated, scores of newspaper stories on Freudianism perfectly preserved. That scrapbook has

proved my richest single source.[17]

IV. Interpretation

So, one confronts a pile of clippings. How to bring order and meaning to this stack of shards? A conceptual framework may permit one to impose order deductively. Or one may work inductively from the shards themselves, allowing the larger meanings to emerge from various experimental arrangements. At the beginning I had a grasp of neither process. I had only a descriptive question: how was Freudian thought transmitted in the press of the 1920's?

In my attempts at order, however, it occurred to me at length to try imposing a version of the Shannon model of the communications process on my shattered fragments. (I was unaware of what would happen to my whole interpretive process as a result.) I would regard Freud as the originator of the "message", I planned. Then I would move to the message as handled by the "encoders", individuals I identified as those who took Freud's ideas and prepared them for the newspapers. Thirdly, I would examine the "channel", the newspaper itself. Finally, on to the "decoders" and "receivers", whom I lumped together as the community at large.[18]

On my static pile of clippings, the model imposed an unexpected dynamic -- the idea of movement and therefore of change. The model made it possible to see how change might occur as ideas were transmitted. Here one perceived that the charge of media "distortion" of Freudian ideas faded into irrelevance. I would pursue the idea of "change", a term that was both less value-laden and more accurate. For such change, what variety of reasons could be responsible?

Gradually an explanation evolved. The idea changed as would any stranger on foreign territory, because it responded to the ideas and demands of the new milieu. That milieu had developed means of accepting ideas when they proved fruitful, and modifying or rejecting them when they did not coincide with existing prejudices, special knowledge or ways of thinking.

Some changes might have been introduced by the various "encoders", advocates or opponents of the ideas who shaped them to their own particular purposes. More significant for my interest as a historian of media was an argument advanced most cogently by certain cultural anthropologists and intellectual historians who have conceived of the newspapers as exa[illegible] of "cultural form."[19]

In such an interpretation the newspaper is an expression of dominant forces in the culture, a medium which reports some aspects of important thought, ignores others and modifies still others to meet common expectations, needs and desires. The newspaper then becomes an object of study in itself as an agent of culture; newspaper clippings may be used as an indication of representative cultural modes of assimilation of any one idea cluster at any one point and the degree of its assimilation over time.[20]

There are challenges to such a neat pattern. Does the newspaper indeed represent the culture at large? Is one claiming too much for the newspaper as evidence? Such a problem has plagued intellectual historians involved in the study of collective mentalities. Such historians, says Lawrence Vesey, should be concerned with the representativeness of the evidence used to make statements about the thought or actions of any group. The elite figures taken to be representative of "American thought" in the age of Parrington were not spokesmen, asserts Vesey, and their writings thus not representative of a true majority of the population. Little surviving evidence exists, he asserts, with which to reconstruct the mental patterns of large portions of the society.[21]

I believe, however, that the newspaper can be a valid form of evidence with which to initiate a reconstruction of these patterns at certain periods in American history.

One argument for the representative nature of American media asserts that media professionals came from the culture and therefore shared and expressed

its assumptions in their work. This argument disregards differences stemming from race, sex or class, and views the media professional as representative of the culture as a whole.[22]

There is only sketchy evidence as to the class origins of most journalists of the 1920's; certainly reporters and editors were almost exclusively white males and would comprise a non-representative sample if they were expected to do no more than reflect the views of the particular group from which they came. However, journalists of the 1920's were expected to write and edit not from their own narrow affiliations, but in terms of the dominant assumptions of the wider culture they served. "Don't think of your own little group of people when you write," Arthur Brisbane of the Hearst chain admonished the socialite-intellectual, Mabel Dodge Luhan, who wrote a column for the New York Journal. She should think, said Brisbane, of the "woman making up the beds in the hotel, or the woman working in the store, or the mother raising a family of children. You can do this work well; if you choose to make yourself do it, as THE MILLIONS OF READERS WANT IT." So Luhan held her public in her mind, she said later, "the shop-girls and young clerks who, Arthur said, read the New York Journal, and I wrote down for them all I learned about psychoanalysis and about myself, and anything else that came along." [23]

The accuracy of such perceptions by journalists was crucially tested in a day when the average reader could choose between nine daily papers in New York City alone. Unlike some papers in monopoly towns 50 years later, newspapers of the 1920's had to meet expectations of their audiences to stay alive.

The newspaper historian of this period, according to this chain of argument, has a valid claim to be dealing with representative evidence of group mentality. Such a historian may infer cultural values from style, tone, word-choice, headline, story placement and so forth as well as from the attitudes and ideas

gleaned from their sources that journalists selected to include in their stories.[24]

* * *

In moving to the analysis of such evidence, one may isolate form from content as subject of examination, though the two are frequently so entertwined as to make such distinctions arbitrary.

Certainly the newspaper had developed by the 1920's an elaborate set of conventions open to analysis. Stylistic formulae demanded that the reporter reduce, dramatize, condense and abbreviate the intellectual substance of a news account to convey its essence in the first few paragraphs. The conventions of the period also encouraged a reporter's use of myth, metaphor, narrative, personification, irony, paradox and a range of other literary devices used to translate the strange into the familiar and to endow it with emotional appeal.

Thus story form provides an analytic tool to help the intellectual historian understand the level of readers' comprehension and the means reporters could use to introduce a new cluster of ideas.

In the first place, the lead as composed by the reporter -- or an introjected remark -- may indicate which ideas were still seen as strange by the society at large. Freudian ideas by now have been so thoroughly incorporated into American consciousness that even the most imaginative contemporary historian may need to see them emblazoned in the leads of the 20's to capture afresh the sense of amazement and consternation they once produced.

Here is the beginning of a story on Dr. William Alanson White's psychoanalytic testimony in defense of the 19-year-old pair, Nathan Leopold, Jr., and Richard Loeb, who murdered 14-year-old Bobby Frank:[25]

> Chicago, Aug. 1--Today two boys with sharp, adult intellects and legally sane minds and bodies were described by science to an American court as being, emotionally, still in long dresses or short pants.

> Science always keeps ahead of law. And this was a new splitting up of the human personality for the purposes of saving from the gallows Nathan Leopold, Jr., and Richard Loeb.
>
> Science--paid by the wealthy fathers of the defendants--said the two intellectual slayers of Bobby Franks were, emotionally, four and six years old. Their bodies are handsome and well-formed. Their minds were prodigious, making them the youngest graduates of the Universities of Chicago and Michigan.
>
> But science said on oath that if their emotions were clothed with human bodies, the crowded courtroom would have seen sitting in the prisoners' dock, not two sleek, intelligent young men, but blubbering, cringing urchins, aged four and six.
>
> Science was represented in the person of Dr. William A. White..../who/described his pioneer probings into the minds that plotted to kill. . . for the thrill of the thing. . . .

All that -- to convey to the readers of the Philadelphia Public-Ledger the idea that while minds and bodies might mature, emotional development could lag far behind. It was, reflected the reporter for the New York Herald-Tribune, "one of the most unusual mind analyses ever pronounced in a criminal court." To a culture steeped in the concept of a Calvinist will as major determinant of action, the Freudian idea of infantile feeling and desire as irresistible impulses in adults was indeed unsettling. To that consternation, then, the lead is a valuable clue.[26]

Other formal elements may be equally revealing. The background or interpretive paragraph may suggest to the historian the developing context and perceived significance of a new idea as it melds into social practice. ("Science always keeps ahead of the law. This was a new splitting up of the human personality....")

Words used without explanation give some notion of jargon that has already entered the common tongue. Here is the headline on the Hearst correspondent's account of the same testimony, taken from the New York Journal:[27]

> LOEB ONLY 5, LEOPOLD 8, SAYS ALIENIST
> BUT EACH IS OWNER OF GIANT EGO

While some Freudian concepts were still strange, obviously the Freudian term "ego" could be casually used by a Hearst head-writer confident his millions of readers would understand.

Metaphors and analogies indicate categories of thought available to readers as methods of assimilating new concepts. ("...if emotions were clothed with bodies...not two sleek, intelligent young men, but blubbering cringing urchins....")

And more subtly still, a reporter's omissions can provide an accurate idea of ideas still inadmissable to the culture. At one point during the Leopold-Loeb trial, reporters had pressed forward to hear testimony being given by an analyst in whispers. "Go back, Gentlemen," said the judge, "This is not for the press." Reporters meekly retired. "The press didn't care," said the Public-Ledger, "what they heard was unprintable anyway." The testimony was about homosexuality.[28]

These, then, are some of the formal elements whose study can prove valuable to the intellectual historian interested in assessing modes and quality of idea assimilation. Future research may permit the use of newspaper form also as a clue to the emotional and intellectual style of readers.

Certainly the reporting of Freudian thought as reflected in the Leopold-Loeb trial and throughout the decade suggests a people emotionally at the height of a romantic revival and eager for a kind of feeling and sensation which every paper, from the New York Times to the San Francisco Chronicle seemed delighted to provide. Intellectually the newspapers of the period evoke an impression of a people pragmatic, episodic and eclectic in their tastes and habits, eager for event and action, impatient with theory, hopeful of some new and useful information.

Newspaper content over a span of time may be approached diachronically or synchronically in a search for the meaning of ideas and the perceived significance of new thought patterns as presented on the newspaper page. For ex-

ample, the changing implications of Freudian terms such as "ego" or "unconscious" may be traced diachronically be searching for changing connotations as reflected in uses and contexts in newspaper copy from 1920 through each year to 1930. Or one may consider the decade synchronically, and interpret through such devices as polarization the apparently conflicting "images" of Freudian philosophy as both libidinous and puritanical or as both optimistic and tragic, images emerging from the newspaper decade as a whole.

End Notes

1. For a discussion of newspaper as cultural form, see Section IV, "Interpretation", below, pp. 12-15.

2. See, for example, Felix Gilbert, writing in "Intellectual History: Its Aims and Methods," Daedalus 100 (Winter, 1971), p. 92, "In popular literature and contents, the ideas, are of secondary interest. They are simple and repetitive." Also E. B. Eiselein, "Media Anthropology: A Theoretical Framework," Human Organization, 35 (Summer, 1976), p. 116. A typical charge of media distortion comes in Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek's study of Freudian influence in America. He devotes a whole section to what he calls media "dilution" and "vulgarization" of Freudian thought. Ruitenbeek, Freud and America (New York: the MacMillan Co., 1966), pp. 71-79. Somewhat the same pejorative implication hovers over studies of media "distortion" by scholars of mass communication theory. See Nan Lin, The Study of Human Communication (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 82-84.

3. To elicit the broadest evocative range, certain terms will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. The words "culture" and "society" will be used in this way without regard to narrower definitions sometimes imposed by anthropologists or sociologists; the words "idea," "concept," and "thought" will be employed in similarly flexible fashion.

4. See Ph.D. dissertation by Catherine L. Covert, "Freud on the Front Page: Transmission of Freudian Ideas in the American Newspaper of the 1920's," Syracuse University, 1975.

5. The President's Research Committee on Social Trends reported in 1933 that coverage of psychoanalysis in seven mass circulation periodicals peaked between 1925 and 1928, as quoted in David Shakow and David Rapaport, The Influence of Freud on American Psychology (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., Meridian Books, 1964), p. 58n. Index references to Freud and psychoanalysis in the New York Times Index peaked in 1925 and 1926, declining to the end of the decade.

6. Shakow and Rapaport, The Influence of Freud, pp. 55-97.

7. J. K. Hall (ed.,) One Hundred Years of American Psychiatry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 236, 299, 574; Zigmond M. Lebensohn, "William Alanson White--Forensic Psychiatrist...." in Arcangelo R. T. D'Amore (ed.,) William Alanson White, The Washington Years, 1903-1937 (Washington: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. DHEW Publication No (ADM) 76-298, 1976), pp. 37-53.

8. The transcript of the trial is now in the Elmer Gertz Collection at Northwestern University.

9. The notebook is preserved with the Dorothy Thompson papers at Syracuse University; Thompson's story was published in the Philadelphia Public-Ledger, Mar. 11, 1923.

10. Thompson's story was not the initial reaction of a naive American, innocent of Freudian thought. member of a sophisticated Viennese circle of authors, artists, musicians, journalists and theater people. Thompson had a good friend undergoing analysis with Freud, and would herself engage with a Freudian ananlyst, Theodor Reik, in several analytic conversations. D. T. to Josef Bard, Berlin, undated, (circa 1926), Dorothy Thompson papers; also Marion K. Sanders, Dorothy Thompson: A Legend in Her Own Time, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1973), pp. 70, 72, 100, 384n.

11. New York Journal, Aug. 2, 1924; Thomas S. Rice, "How to Make Crime News Constructive," Journalism Bulletin V (January, 1929), pp. 18-22.

12. John Higham, "Introduction" in John Higham and Paul K. Conkin (eds.,) New Directions in American Intellectual History, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. xv.

13. Frank E. Manuel, "The Use and Abuse of Psychology in History," Daedalus 100 (Winter, 1971), pp. 193-4; Laurence Veysey, "Intellectual History and the New Social History," New Directions, p. 25n; Nathan G. Hale, Jr., Freud and the Americans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

14. See Ph.D. dissertation by Elizabeth J. Thompson, "A Community Looks at Delinquency: Attitudes Toward Juvenile Misbehavior as Expressed in the Syracuse New York Daily Press, 1925-1965," Syracuse University, 1971.

15. Herbert O. Brayer, "Preliminary Guide to Indexed Newspapers in the United States, 1850-1900," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 33 (September, 1946), pp. 237-258; Norma Olin Ireland, Local Indexes in American Libraries, (Boston: Faxon, 1947); Walter R. Griffin and Jay L. Rasmussen, "A Comprehensive Guide to the Location of Published and Unpublished Newspaper Indexes in Colorado Repositories," The Colorado Magazine 49 (Fall, 1972), pp. 326-339; Anita Cheek Milner, Newspaper Indexes: A Location and Subject Guide for Researchers, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1977).

16. When I visited the morgue of the New York Herald-Tribune, in 1974, at that time held by New York University, I was told that it was rarely consulted by more than one or two scholars a month. For indicating the rich possibilities of such a categorical system to intellectual history, I am indebted to Dr. Frank Johnson, Upstate Medical Center, State University of New York in Syracuse. Says Laurence Veysey, "...if we want to write a fully satisfying intellectual history of only a few events occurring over a brief period of time, we will have to know what structure of conventions existed, what choices of ideas were available to the historical participants, in order to know why they selected and used those they did." See Veysey, New Directions, pp. 35 and 36.

17. The scrapbook is preserved in the Isador Coriat papers, Francis A. Countway Library, Harvard University Medical School.

18. C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver, The Mathematical Theory of Communication, (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

19. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," Daedalus 101 (Winter, 1972), pp. 1-37; James Carey, "Mass Communication Research and Cultural Studies: an American view," in James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott, (eds.,) Mass Communication and Society, (London: Edward

20. Obviously the relationship between the newspaper and its culture is reflexive. Intellectual historians for the most part have tended to assess only the influence of media on culture. See for example James Hitchcock who observes that media "by noting some movements while neglecting others, go a long way toward determining which new ideas will gain acceptance and which will not." in "The Dynamics of Popular Intellectual Change," American Scholar 45 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 523-24. Anthropologists have historically been more sensitive to the newspaper in its converse role, as reflector of culture. Says W. L. Warner, "Despite the intrusion of modern canons of accuracy and the infusion of the spirit or rationality into newspapers...the 'objective' coverage of what happens every day to the people of the world is dominated by the basic wishes, the hopes and fears, the non-logical symbolic themes and folk beliefs of the people who buy and read the papers." The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 54-55.

21. Veysey, New Directions, pp. 20-24.

22. Film historians, of all historians of mass media, have probably devoted the most concentrated attention to the problem of the representative nature of media in relationship to culture. As an example of such a holistic approach see William Hughes, "The Evaluation of Film as Evidence," in Paul Smith (ed.,) The Historian and Film, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 68-71; also James Monaco, How To Read A Film, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 220.

23. A. Brisbane to Mabel Dodge Luhan, n.d., in Luhan, Movers and Shakers (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), p. 509.

24. A recent exemplar of such an impressionistic approach to deriving values from news form and content is Herbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979) particularly the chapter, "Values in the News", pp. 39-69.

25. Philadelphia Public-Ledger, Aug. 2, 1924.

26. New York Herald-Tribune, Aug. 2, 1924.

27. New York Journal, Aug. 2, 1924.

28. Philadelphia Public-Ledger, Aug. 5, 1924.